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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## New rule addresses wrong-site surgeries

DES MOINES, IA -- The Iowa Board of Medicine is taking steps to protect the public from surgical errors with a new administrative rule that establishes sanctions for physicians who perform the wrong procedure, or perform a procedure at the wrong anatomical site or on the wrong patient.

“Although wrong-site surgeries are rare, they can have devastating consequences for the patient,” said Siroos Shirazi, M.D., chairperson of the Board. “They are seen as a preventable medical error if certain steps are taken and standardized procedures are taken in the perioperative setting.”

Under the new subrule 23.1(42) in Chapter 17 of the Board’s administrative rules, physicians found guilty of wrong-site surgery can face disciplinary sanctions, which may include suspension or revocation of their Iowa medical license and a civil penalty of up to \$10,000.

The Board initiated the subrule October 7, 2009, and it becomes effective March 17, 2010.

Of the 700 to 900 complaints the Board receives each year, 2 to 4 of them allege wrong-site surgery.

Wrong-site surgery is defined as a sentinel event (i.e., an unexpected occurrence involving death or serious physical or psychological injuries, or the risk thereof) by the Joint Commission, which operates accreditation programs for more than 17,000 hospitals and other health care organizations.

Wrong-site surgery results from poor preoperative planning, lack of institutional controls, failure of the surgeon to exercise due care, or a simple mistake in communication between the patient and surgeon.

The commission advises patients and family members to make sure that there is total agreement between themselves, their primary care physician and the surgeon about exact what will be done and where.